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ABSTRACT

Establishing name authority files in such multilingual nations as Nigeria is complicated by the existence of some 400 languages and dialects, although only about 15 percent of these have been written or used in publications--English is used as the official language and the medium of intercommunication between tribes. Traditionally, Nigerians have been known by their given names derived from four categories: circumstance of birth, religion of the family clan, profession of the family, and history of previous births. With the influence of the English and other Europeans, elements of Islam and Christianity have been introduced into the naming system. At first, surnames were unknown, but as education developed, family consciousness and cohesion have caused the development of an uneven pattern of surnames: it is a mistake to believe that a name is a surname merely because it appears last, and Hausa names have given particular difficulty in this regard. Nevertheless, the National Library of Nigeria has succeeded in establishing name authority files of Nigerian authors through research and the cooperation of authors and publishers brought together in workshops and seminars. (EAA)

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PROBLEMS IN ESTABLISHING A NAME AUTHORITY FILE FOR NIGERIAN AUTHORS

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PROBLEMS IN ESTABLISHING A NAME AUTHORITY FILE FOR NIGERIAN AUTHORS

INTRODUCTION

History and the Background to the many variations in Nigerian Names

Nigeria like many other African countries is enriched with about 400 languages and dialects. About 15% of these have so far been written or used in publications. For example, A Bibliography of Scriptures in African Languages compiled by Geraldine Elizabeth Goldham, published by the British and Foreign Bible Society, London in 1966 lists Bible translations in over fifty (50) Nigerian languages. In the 1978 edition of the National Bibliography of Nigeria (NBN), publications in 30 Nigerian languages are listed. In addition to these Nigerians languages, the English language is used as the official language and as the medium of communication among people of the different tribes.

Traditionally or before the coming of the Europeans, Nigerians were known and called by their personal and given names. This is because most of the major tribes have a very strong belief in nomenclature, especially in the circumstances under which a child is born. Such names can be grouped into four categories determined by the circumstances of birth, the religion of the family clan, the profession of the family or the history of previous births in the family. For example:-

(a) Amutorunwa (name attributed to a child based on the circumstances of birth). This has three variants.

(i) Biological Circumstance: This is based on the form or position which the child takes in the process of child-bearing. Such names are Taiwo/Kehinde (given to twins), Ajayi; Oke; Dada; Ige etc. These are all Yoruba names.

(ii) Ifa Divination Before and after the Child Bearing: This is the forecast which Ifa or Oracle gives as to what name the child will bear as a result of the 'Odu Corpus' which emerge in the process of Ifa divination when the parents consult Ifa Priest. Such names are: Odunbaku, Amusan-an.

(iii) Seasonal Names or Names Derived from Current Events or the Festivals being celebrated when the child is born: such names are Abiodun; Egunjobi; Oyesola etc.

(b) The Religion of the Family Clan: A child is named after the traditional religion of the family. This is a common practice among various ethnic groups in Nigeria, except the muslims. In this group of names the suffix or the prefix to the names may reflect the traditional god after which the child is named. For example:-

Tribes		Names
Edo	-	Obaseki
Efik	-	Eno-Abasi, Eno-Obong
Igbo	-	Chukwuemeka, Chidi, Amadi
Itsekiri	-	Oritsegbubemi, Oritsewehimi
Yoruba	-	Oguntunde, Orisatola, Ojetunde.

(c) The Profession of the Family: The profession of the family may reflect in the child's name. e.g. Ogungbemi, Alayande.

(d) Abiku (child believed to have been born and have died more than once or twice). For a long time in Nigeria, the rate of infant mortality was high. This gave rise to the belief that the same child may die and reincarnate several times in the same family. Such a child is referred to in Yoruba as 'Abiku' (the born-to-die child) or 'Ogbanje' in Igbo. When a child is suspected to be 'born-to-die', unpleasant names are coined to scare such child

from "constant death". A few of such names are Kosoko; Akisatan; Jekami etc.

From the above examples it is obvious that most ethnic groups in Nigeria put more emphasis on a child's given name more than the family name. Because of the historical and emotional reasons attached to these names, a person is better known or may in most cases prefer to be identified by his own personal names.

2. THE ENGLISH INFLUENCE

With the influence of the English and the Europeans, other elements were introduced into the Nigerian naming system. These new elements were the offsprings of Islam and the Christian religion. Both Islam and Christianity introduced foreign names such as David, John, Williams, Mohammed, Ibrahim, etc, as given names especially at Baptism (if a christian). Such names were first introduced in the late 19th century and became prominent during the first quarter of the 20th century. An interesting aspect about names at that period, is that while the fathers, who were born and named before the advent of the Europeans and the new religious influences, were bearing their indigenous names, their converted children were either bearing their baptismal or adopted English or Arabic names. Initially, there was no need for a surname or an additional name. But with more and more children being enrolled in schools, there developed an increasing need for identification. It became necessary to add an identifying element to a child's name in order to differentiate him from other children with similar given names. At first there were no surnames as they are now conceived. Surnames or last names then might mean any of the identifying elements added to a person's name. As more and more members of a family were being educated, there developed a family consciousness and cohesion, which led to the adoption of a family identity. At this stage, the children of a father began to adopt their father's real

name as surnames. Such surnames could be given names derived from any of the examples described above e.g. Oluwole, Taiwo, Kosoko, Aniemeka, Williams, Ighodaro, Mohammed, Odiase, Essien etc.

If the adoption of the family name as surnames had developed evenly throughout the country, the problem of determining which should be the entry word in a combination of names could have been reduced. On the contrary, the problem is more aggravated because of different practices by the different tribes. For example while the majority of the people in the Southern parts of the country, the Igbos, Yorubas and Edos have adopted the English practice of writing surnames last, the people of the Northern parts add other elements which are not surnames or family names to their names. Even with the people in the South, it is wrong to assume that the elements of their names written last are their surnames. This is because of preferences based on the traditional naming systems described above. This of course is the root of the problems, which we now experience in trying to determine either the surnames or the preferred names of our Nigerian authors.

3. SPECIFIC PROBLEMS POSED BY HAUSA NAMES

The area where most problems are encountered is with the Hausa names. Miss Monica Greaves in her article published in the Nigerian Libraries in 1974 discussed the problem of dealing with Hausa author entries, especially in the application of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR). For example, according to AACR, 1967, Rule 40 (as we have not received copies of the new AACR 2, my reference, regrettably has to be limited to the 1967 ed.) personal author entries are to be entered under the name by which the author is "commonly identified, whether it is his real name, or an assumed name, nickname, title of nobility, or other appellation". Because of the different combinations in the Nigerian names, especially the Hausa names, and because of language differences, it is not easy to

name of an author. From our experience with Hausa names the following common combinations pose different problems:-

(i) Combination of Family Name or Place Name

An author may add his father's name or the name of his place of birth or residence to his name. When an author adds his family name (usually his father's name) to his given name, entry is under the family name.

e.g. for Jabiru Abdullahi entry is ABDULLAHI, Jabiru.

But when an author adds his place name to his own personal name entry is under the first part of the name, with a reference from the place name.

e.g. For Aminu Kano

entry is AMINU KANO

KANO, AMINU see AMINU KANO.

Abubakar Tafawa Balewa

entry is ABUBAKAR TAFAWA BALEWA.

BALEWA, Abubakar Tafawa see ABUBAKAR TAFAWA BALEWA.

There is also the problem of authors who combine both family name and place name with their personal names.

e.g. Mohammed Kabir Mahmoud Galadanci.

The last word in this combination is place name; entry should be under the family name, with reference from the place name; and the place name dropped from the entry:-

e.g. MAHMOUD, Mohammed Kabir.

GALADANCI, Mohammed Kabir Mahmoud see MAHMOUD, Mohammed Kabir.

(ii) Honorific Names, Nicknames, etc

It is common for an Hausa man to have only one name, a personal name followed by a nickname, (which may indicate occupation,

complexion, tribe, height, title, trade or deformity) or an honorific name indicating position. For example, the following names are common:-

Sani Fani = Sani who is light in complexion;

Ibro Dan Fulani = Ibro the Fulani man;

Idi Dogo = Idi the tall man

Idi Dan gayere = Idi the short man

Sale Mai Tebur = Sale the trader

Yar gurguwa = The one legged

In such cases entry is under the first part of the name with a reference from the second part. The problem here is how to know which is a nickname, an honorific or a family name or surname. For as mentioned above, when we are sure that the family name is added, entry is under the family name. On the other hand, if the last name is an honorific or a nickname, entry is under the first part of the name.

(iii) In addition to the above, we have the problem posed by the many appellations attached to the name Mohammed, which are common with the Muslims.

e.g. Mohammed Sani

- Salisu
- Rabiu
- Hamisu
- Sadisu
- Sabiu
- Ashiru

meaning "Mohammed, the first, the second, the third", etc. It is also possible to have:-

Mohammed Kabir

- Munir
- Sagir etc.

The point here is that both names i.e. 'Mohammed Kabir' may be the personal names of the author without adding his father's name or that of a place. When this is the case the entry is under the first part of the name. From conversation with authors and publishers during seminars or workshops, we have found that authors who sign their personal names on their publications prefer to be entered under the first part of the name. Whereas, authors who add family names, prefer to be entered under their family names as surnames. Again the problem is knowing which is which. That is, whether the pair of names belong to one person or not. There are also cases of real personal names spelt like place names e.g.

Isa (Isaa)

Isa (Iisa, a town in Sokoto)

Mani (Maanii, short for Usman)

Mani (Maani, a town in Katsina Emirate)

This means that the name, Musa Mani constitutes another problem; that of knowing whether to use the first or the second part. Because of these variations in most Nigerian names, it is wrong to assume that the part of a name written last is the family name, the surname or the place name. As an author once said "I hope we shall be yet wiser and know what is the meaning of surnames in our own context". This is the crux of the problem.

4. SOLUTIONS TO SOME OF THE PROBLEMS

Nevertheless, the National Library of Nigeria has succeeded in building up a Name Authority File of Nigerian authors through research and contacts with authors and publishers. The Name Authority File which we hope to publish before the end of this year, consists of full names of authors whose books have been deposited with:-

(i) The University of Ibadan between 1950 and 1970.

(ii) The National Library of Nigeria from 1970 -

The first part of the project was a delibrate attempt to establish the full names of authors whose initials appear on the title pages. This was done by sending a proforma letter (a sample of which is attached) to the publishers asking them to supply the full names, and where necessary, the dates of birth, of authors whose initials appear on the title page(s). This method has proved effective with recent titles and with publishers whose addresses are known. But with titles deposited over a decade or more ago, we encounter some problem because of:-

(i) Publishers whose addresses are not known and

(ii) Publishers who are no longer publishing.

With authors using initials of their forenames followed by a spelt out name, there is little or no problem in determining which should be the entry name. This is because the name written last after the initials, is in most cases, the surname. In order to avoid confusion with other names with the same initials, we find it necessary to establish the full names represented by initials. It is noteworthy that we have received the co-operation and full support of publishers and authors in this project.

Another method which has proved effective is through informal discussions and appeals to publishers during seminars and workshops. Through this medium we have advised publishers to ask the authors of their publications to indicate their preference by underlining or printing their preferred names in capital letters. The staff of the Cataloguing Department have also visited university libraries and institutes of linguistics, especially in the Hausa speaking parts of the country to consult with experts in Hausa names. This method has been very helpful in determing which part of a combination of names should be entered first. We have also discovered that some authors who add their father's names to their own given names, when asked their preference, have said that they prefer to be entered under their own given names. This has shown that the only

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effective method whereby a cataloguer can know by which name an author is 'commonly identified' is by asking the authors to show their preference on their publications.

5. OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES

It is remarkable that similar problems are experienced in other African countries. For example, it is difficult to distinguish given names and surnames of the Sonrai (a tribe in the Northern part of the Republic of Mali). In some parts of the Cameroons Repubic, most people write their surnames first without a comma to separate them from their forenames. This developed out of the practice of writing surnames first in Forms and Passports. The people have become so used to this style that they now naturally write their surnames first with no punctuation.

6. CONCLUSION

The problem of knowing what part of the name of an author should be entered first cannot be solved by Librarians alone. We need the co-operation of publishers and the authors themselves. This is why the National Library of Nigeria has placed much premium on inviting publishers and authors to meet at seminars and workshops to discuss not only international standards for book production, but also to suggest solutions to some of the problems described above. In conclusion, I strongly recommend that Nigerian Publishers should adopt the French style of capitalising the entry part of an author's name on the title page. Thus in our publications we will find author's names printed as:-

Chinua ACHEBE

ADAMU Dangoggo

T. A. AMOO

Musa IBRAHIM

Zulu SOFOLA

Wole SOYINKA

YAHAYA Gusau

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CATALOGUING DEPARTMENT

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Dear Sir/Madam,

Name Authority File

The above named file consists of the full names of Nigerian authors, especially those whose published works are received in this Library in accordance with the provisions of the National Library Decree, 1970.

2. Your publication(s), entitled

which was deposited with this Library is at the moment undergoing technical processing. We shall therefore be pleased if you would let us have the full names represented by the initials as printed on the title page, and the date of birth of the author in order to complete our technical processing.

Yours faithfully,

Head, Cataloguing Department,
for: Director.

Mr. J. O. Kolawole B. A. (Hons.)

Director S.B. Aje M.A. F.L.A. A.M.N.I.M. Secretary [illegible] BANKAIRON